

PERIOD 3: c. 1815 to c. 1914

Key Concept 3.1. The Industrial Revolution spread from Great Britain to the continent, where the state played a greater role in promoting industry.

The transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy began in Britain in the 18th century, spread to France and Germany between 1850 and 1870, and finally spread to Russia in the 1890s. The governments of those countries actively supported industrialization. In southern and eastern Europe, some pockets of industry developed, surrounded by traditional agrarian economies. Although continental nations sought to borrow from and in some instances imitate the British model — the success of which was represented by the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851 — each nation's experience of industrialization was shaped by its own matrix of geographic, social, and political factors. The legacy of the revolution in France, for example, led to a more gradual adoption of mechanization in production, ensuring a more incremental industrialization than was the case in Britain. Despite the creation of a customs union in the 1830s, Germany's lack of political unity hindered its industrial development. However, following unification in 1871, the German Empire quickly came to challenge British dominance in key industries, such as steel, coal, and chemicals.

Beginning in the 1870s, the European economy fluctuated widely because of the vagaries of financial markets. Continental states responded by assisting and protecting the development of national industry in a variety of ways, the most important being protective tariffs, military procurements, and colonial conquests. Key economic stakeholders, such as corporations and industrialists, expected governments to promote economic development by subsidizing ports, transportation, and new inventions; registering patents and sponsoring education; encouraging investments and enforcing contracts; and maintaining order and preventing labor strikes. State intervention reached its culmination in the 20th century, when some governments took over direction of the entire process of industrial development under the pressure of war and depression and/or from ideological commitments.

Key Concept 3.2. The experiences of everyday life were shaped by industrialization, depending on the level of industrial development in a particular location.

Industrialization promoted the development of new socioeconomic classes between 1815 and 1914. In highly industrialized areas, such as western and northern Europe, the new economy created new social divisions, leading for the first time to the development of self-conscious economic classes, especially the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In addition, economic changes led to the rise of trade and industrial unions, benevolent associations, sport clubs, and distinctive class-based cultures of dress, speech, values, and customs. Europe also experienced rapid population growth and urbanization that resulted in benefits as well as social dislocations. The increased population created an enlarged labor force, but in some areas migration from the countryside to the towns and cities led to overcrowding and significant emigration overseas.

Industrialization and urbanization changed the structure and relations of bourgeois and working-class families to varying degrees. Birth control became increasingly common across Europe, and childhood experience changed with the advent of protective legislation, universal schooling, and smaller families. The growth of a cult of domesticity established new models of gendered behavior for men and women. Gender roles became more clearly defined as middle-class women withdrew from the workforce. At the same time, working-class women increased their participation as wage-laborers, although the middle class criticized them for neglecting their families.

Industrialization and urbanization also changed people's conception of time; in particular, work and leisure were increasingly differentiated by means of the imposition of strict work schedules and the separation of the workplace from the home. Increasingly, trade unions assumed responsibility for the social welfare of working-class families, fighting for improved working conditions and shorter hours. Increasing leisure time spurred the development of leisure activities and spaces for bourgeois families. Overall, although inequality and poverty remained significant social problems, the quality of material life improved. For most social groups, the standard of living rose, the availability of consumer products grew, and sanitary standards, medical care, and life expectancy improved.

Key Concept 3.3. The problems of industrialization provoked a range of ideological, governmental, and collective responses.

The French and industrial revolutions triggered dramatic political and social consequences and new theories to deal with them. The ideologies engendered by these 19th-century revolutions — conservatism, liberalism, socialism, nationalism, and even romanticism — provided their adherents with coherent views of the world and differing blueprints for change. For example, utopian socialists experimented with communal living as a social and economic response to change. The responses to socioeconomic changes reached a culmination in the revolutions of 1848, but the failure of these uprisings left the issues raised by the economic, political, and social transformations unresolved well into the 20th century.

In the second half of the 19th century, labor leaders in many countries created unions and syndicates to provide the working classes with a collective voice, and these organizations used collective action such as strikes and movements for men's universal suffrage to reinforce their demands. Feminists and suffragists petitioned and staged public protests to press their demands for similar rights for women. The international movements for socialism, labor, and women's rights were important examples of a trend toward international cooperation in a variety of causes, including antislavery and peace movements. Finally, political parties emerged as sophisticated vehicles for advocating reform or reacting to changing conditions in the political arena.

Nationalism acted as one of the most powerful engines of political change, inspiring revolutions as well as campaigns by states for national unity or a higher degree of centralization. Early nationalism emphasized shared historical and cultural experiences that often threatened traditional elites. Over the course of the 19th century, leaders recognized the need to promote national unity through economic development and expanding state functions to meet the challenges posed by industry.

Key Concept 3.4. European states struggled to maintain international stability in an age of nationalism and revolutions.

Following a quarter-century of revolutionary upheaval and war spurred by Napoleon's imperial ambitions, the Great Powers met in Vienna in 1814–1815 to re-establish a workable balance of power and suppress liberal and nationalist movements for change. Austrian Foreign Minister Klemens von Metternich led the way in creating an informal security arrangement to resolve international disputes and stem revolution through common action among the Great Powers. Nonetheless, revolutions aimed at liberalization of the political system and national self-determination defined the period from 1815 to 1848.

The revolutions that swept Europe in 1848 were triggered by poor economic conditions, frustration at the slow pace of political change, and unfulfilled nationalist aspirations. At first, revolutionary forces succeeded in establishing regimes dedicated to change or to gaining independence from great-power domination. However, conservative forces, which still controlled the military and bureaucracy, reasserted control. Although the revolutions of 1848 were, as George Macaulay Trevelyan quipped, a “turning point at which modern history failed to turn,” they set the stage for a subsequent sea change in European diplomacy. A new breed of conservative leader, exemplified by Napoleon III of France, co-opted nationalism as a top-down force for the advancement of state power and authoritarian rule in the name of “the people.” Further, the Crimean War (1853–1856), prompted by the decline of the Ottoman Empire, shattered the Concert of Europe established in 1815 and opened the door for the unifications of Italy and Germany. Using the methods of *Realpolitik*, Cavour in Italy and Bismarck in Germany succeeded in unifying their nations after centuries of disunity. Their policies of war, diplomatic intrigue, and, in Bismarck's instance, manipulation of democratic mechanisms created states with the potential for upsetting the balance of power, particularly in the case of Germany.

Following the Crimean War, Russia undertook a series of internal reforms aimed at achieving industrial modernization. The reforms succeeded in establishing an industrial economy and emboldened Russia's aspirations in the Balkans. They also led to an active revolutionary movement, which employed political violence and assassinations and was one of the driving forces behind the 1905 Russian Revolution. After the new German Emperor Wilhelm II dismissed Chancellor Bismarck in 1890, Germany's diplomatic approach altered significantly, leading to a shift in the alliance system and increased tensions in European diplomacy. Imperial antagonisms, growing nationalism, militarism, and other factors resulted in the development of a rigid system of alliances. The Great Powers militarized their societies and built up army and naval forces to unprecedented levels (fed by industrial and technological advances), while at the same time developing elaborate plans for the next war.

Key Concept 3.5. A variety of motives and methods led to the intensification of European global control and increased tensions among the Great Powers.

The European imperial outreach of the 19th century was in some ways a continuation of three centuries of colonization, but it also resulted from the economic pressures and necessities of a maturing industrial economy. The new technologies and imperatives of the second industrial revolution (1870–1914) led many European nations to view overseas territories as sources of raw materials and consumer markets. While European colonial empires in the Western Hemisphere diminished in size over this period as former colonies gained independence, the region remained dependent on Europe as a source of capital and technological expertise and was a market for European-made goods. European powers also became increasingly dominant in Eastern and Southern Asia in the early 19th century, and a combination of forces created the conditions for a new wave of imperialism there and in Africa later in the century. Moreover, European national rivalries accelerated the expansion of colonialism as governments recognized that actual control of these societies offered economic and strategic advantages. Notions of global destiny and racial superiority fed the drive for empire, and innovations such as antimalarial drugs, machine guns, and gunboats made it feasible. Non-European societies without these modern advantages could not effectively resist European imperial momentum.

The “new imperialism” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was promoted in European nations by interest groups that included politicians, military officials and soldiers, missionaries, explorers, journalists, and intellectuals. As an example of a new complex phase of imperial diplomacy, the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885 outlined the procedures that Europeans should use in the partition of the African continent. By 1914, most of Africa and Asia were under the domination of Great Britain, France, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Notwithstanding the power of colonial administrations, some groups in the colonial societies resisted European imperialism, and by 1914, anticolonial movements had taken root within the non-European world and in Europe itself.

Imperialism exposed Europeans to foreign societies and introduced “exotic” influences into European art and culture. At the same time, millions of Europeans carried their culture abroad, to the Americas and elsewhere, through emigration, and helped to create a variety of mixed cultures around the world.

Key Concept 3.6. European ideas and culture expressed a tension between objectivity and scientific realism on one hand, and subjectivity and individual expression on the other.

The romantic movement of the early 19th century set the stage for later cultural perspectives by encouraging individuals to cultivate their uniqueness and to trust intuition and emotion as much as reason. Partly in reaction to the Enlightenment, romanticism affirmed the value of sensitivity, imagination, and creativity and thereby provided a climate for artistic experimentation. Later artistic movements such as Impressionism, Expressionism, and Cubism, which rested on subjective interpretations of reality by the individual artist or writer, arose from the attitudes fostered by romanticism. The sensitivity of artists to non-European traditions that imperialism brought to their attention also can be traced to the romantics' emphasis on the primacy of culture in defining the character of individuals and groups.

In science, Darwin's evolutionary theory raised questions about human nature, and physicists began to challenge the uniformity and regularity of the Newtonian universe. In 1905, Einstein's theory of relativity underscored the position of the observer in defining reality, while the quantum principles of randomness and probability called the objectivity of Newtonian mechanics into question. The emergence of psychology as an independent discipline, separate from philosophy on the one hand and neurology on the other, led to investigations of human behavior that gradually revealed the need for more subtle methods of analysis than those provided by the physical and biological sciences. Freud's investigations into the human psyche suggested the power of irrational motivations and unconscious drives.

Many writers saw humans as governed by spontaneous, irrational forces and believed that intuition and will were as important as reason and science in the search for truth. In art, literature, and science, traditional notions of objective, universal truths and values increasingly shared the stage with a commitment to and recognition of subjectivity, skepticism, and cultural relativism.